

Is man born with an inherent belief in Allah (swt)?

Is man born with an inherent belief in Allah (swt)? Is the existence of Allah (swt) self-evident? Is the state of disbelief parallel to human nature? If man were left alone, without external influences, would he reach Islam? Is the creed of Islam based on human nature?

In a famous Hadeeth our beloved messenger (saws) said: "Every child is born upon the pure fitra, it is only his parents that later turn him into a Jew, a Christian, or a Magian (narrated by Sahih Muslim)

Man is created with certain self-inherent attributes such as sight, and hearing, which is known as Fitra in Arabic; it is the creation of man in a certain fashion to aid him perform certain actions. So the question that arises: Is man born into this world with a belief in Allah (swt) as he is born to see and hear, or must he use these inherently created attributes correctly to reach to a belief in Allah (swt)? At first glance if we look at the ahadeeth (plural of Hadeeth) and verses related to this topic; we can be lead to belief in an inherent belief in Allah (swt) within man. But if we gather many evidences together and closely study the evidences dealing with this subject we will be lead to say that belief in Allah (swt) is not self inherent, nor is it the nature of man upon which he is created like sight and hearing. Rather Allah (swt) created man and created within him the ability to reach Imaan through thinking and learning.

The linguistic definition of Fitra is what is meant in the ahadith and verses dealing with the issue at hand. So Allah (swt) created man and placed in him the potential and ability to reach the truth if he used the power and ability, which Allah (swt) created in him. From this we understand the statement of Imaam As-Fahani when he states that the Fitra of Allah (swt) is the power and ability to reach Imaan.

If we use the Hadith quoted above and placed it in its correct context and gathered with it other evidences; then it will lead us to the position that the belief in Allah (swt) is reached via Fitra. Furthermore those who push the view of a self-inherent created belief in Allah (swt) seem to ignore the ending of the Hadeeth which states if they were Muslims (parents) then the child is a Muslim this addition to the Hadith which is ignored by many, shows that just as the child is influenced by his Christian, Jewish or Magian parents similarly is the case with a child of Muslim parents. In other words the child is not inherently called a disbeliever or Muslim, rather the ruling on the child is attached to his parents and not inherent, where the state of his/her parents apply on him/her. Otherwise how can a child be made a Muslim in accordance to his parents if he was born already on the state of Islam? Based on this: The belief of the child, whether Islam or Kufir, is not an original state but follows the state of his or her parents.

Imaam An-Nawawi in his exegesis of this Hadith as narrated in Saheeh Muslims states and what is more correct is that it means that every new born is born prepared to accept Islam, so whoever parents are Muslims or one of them continues upon Islam in the rulings of the world and hereafter, and if his parents were disbelievers then its rulings its rulings are implemented upon him in this world.

On another note Imaam As-Shafi'ee says in his commentary of the Hadith as narrated by Abu-Abdur-Rahman Al-Baghdadi that Fitra in this Hadith means the Fitra or inherent creation which Allah (swt) created

His creation, that the child, if he does not clarify his belief on his own account, will have no ruling for himself, but as explained previously their ruling will be in accordance to their parents, if Muslim then the child will follow in that ruling and if disbelief the child will hold the ruling of a disbeliever in this world.

Imaam Al-Manawi in his own study of Fitra concludes And what occurs is that man is inherently created to be strongly prepared to accept Islam, but he must learn it.

Furthermore Allah (swt) says in the Koran "It is He Who brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers when ye knew nothing." This verse is general in its denotation, which negates the chance that the child has any knowledge whatsoever when he enters this world, and at most the child will have an inherent created ability through learning and striving to reach conclusions.

On the other hand the Christians debated this issue and John Damascene who was canonized as a saint by Christian orthodoxy, defended the position that the knowledge of Allah's (swt) existence is implanted and created in man, he says in "An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith": That there is a God, then, is no matter of doubt to those who receive the Holy Scriptures, the Old Testament, I mean, and the New; nor indeed to most of the Greeks. For, as we said, the knowledge of the existence of God is implanted in us by nature. But since the wickedness of the Evil One has prevailed so mightily against man's nature as even to drive some into denying the existence of God, that most foolish and woe-fullest pit of destruction (whose folly David, revealer of the Divine meaning, exposed when he said, The fool said in his heart, There is no God), so the disciples of the Lord and His Apostles, made wise by the Holy Spirit and working wonders in His power and grace, took them captive in the net of miracles and drew them up out of the depths of ignorance to the light of the knowledge of God.

However later on the famous Thomas Aquinas objected to the claims of John Damascene stating: Therefore I say that this proposition, "God exists," of itself is self-evident, for the predicate is the same as the subject, because God is His own existence as will be hereafter shown. Now because we do not know the essence of God, the proposition is not self-evident to us; but needs to be demonstrated by things that are more known to us, though less known in their nature--namely, by effects.

Supposedly Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) came under the impact of Islamic teachings when studying at the University of Naples, founded by the Norman King Frederick II of Sicily, who patronized Arab learning and had these teachings translated into Latin. Regardless of this, despite affirming the use of reason by many Church fathers, orthodoxy always affirmed the trinity of the Godhead, a stance that surely disagrees with correct reasoning and thinking.

To conclude:

Man is created with a mind that differentiates him from other creation, if he uses this mind correctly, and if he strives and learns he will surely reach Islam, as Imaam An-Nawawi stated "every new born is born prepared to accept Islam. So every new born is inherently created in a state prepared to accept Islam and in the belief of a Creator but he must use his mind to reach that conclusion. It is this enlightened thought that will in turn solve

the fundamental question about man, life, and the universe and its relationship with that, that comes before it and after it. When this is solved then everything is then everything will follow as it is the basis which all thought and action will be built upon, and the first step on the road to revival.